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**Time to Pack in Iraq?**  
**by Senator Larry Craig**

“Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” The story goes that this was the definition Albert Einstein gave for insanity. It reminds me of the plan some congressional Democrats have to set a deadline for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. None of my colleagues in the House and Senate are insane, but this so-called “cut and run” strategy has reared its head before. It’s the same bad plan, but with new salesmen.

Almost as soon as Baghdad fell in 2003, some in Congress began to call for withdrawal of U.S. forces based on dates that were basically pulled from a hat. As time passes, these calls resurface, perhaps slightly repackaged with different labels. Again and again, the American public rejects them, and rightly so.

Sadly, the idea of leaving early is not unique to Iraq. We left Vietnam before the mission was completed. The same was true of Beirut in 1983 and Somalia in 1993. History has been harsh in showing us what happens when we leave before the mission is accomplished. Somehow, though, congressional Democrats are convinced that this time, the consequences will be different.

Don’t be fooled, though. The outcome, just as before, would be lasting damage to the United States abroad, making us a target for future attacks. It’s difficult enough fighting terrorists who promote a fascist ideology. We shouldn’t look for ways to undermine ourselves too.

What we must do is, for the most part, what we and 28 allied nations have been doing: providing a stabilizing force in Iraq, and killing or capturing terrorist forces, so that the budding democracy can take root there and grow.

A stable, democratic Iraq benefits not just the United States, but the entire region of the Middle East, which, until a few years ago, had little hope for peace and prosperity in our lifetime. Just across the border in Iran, pro-democracy groups and progressive students look to the U.S. and Iraq for inspiration and encouragement. What will they see? Hopefully, two governments that will stand firm for their founding principles in the face of difficulty.

Without question, things have not gone perfectly in Iraq, and no one makes that claim. Progress has been sometimes hard to distinguish. Like many Americans, I have had my moments of doubt, and

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have at times felt overwhelmed by the challenges our country, the coalition, and the Iraqi people face in establishing a stable country in a volatile region.

However, recent events tell us things are changing.

Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki successfully formed a national unity government of officials elected by Iraqis. That same day, another hurdle was overcome. The annihilation of Zarqawi was an achievement that signifies many things. It is unquestionable proof that support for Al Qaeda in Iraq is dwindling. And it is dwindling at the hands of former supporters, who not only led coalition forces to Zarqawi, but will also turn others like him over to Iraq and U.S. forces in the near future. This human intelligence has already led to many arrests and seizures of terrorists and their resources.

Getting Zarqawi also demonstrates that U.S. and Iraqi forces are learning and adapting. As Iraqi forces grow and improve in capability, American men and women in uniform will relinquish the reins of security to Iraqis.

That is the standard that must be achieved, not some arbitrary date on a calendar that comes whether we've succeeded or not.

The people of the United States know how important it is to receive a little help sometimes. At Yorktown, American troops brought an end to the Revolutionary War, but not without help from French naval ships. The French prevented the British Navy from coming to General Cornwallis' rescue, and he was forced to surrender to George Washington.

In the same way, the United States must continue to stand by Iraq in its hour of need. We cannot leave before Iraqis are ready to take control of their own security. Abandoning Iraq now would be "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Insanity indeed.